



NEWS RELEASE

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Volunteers help launch Challenge Wales' participation in global microplastics survey

Challenge Wales volunteers helped the charity undertake its first microplastics survey on Barry Island beach as part of a collaborative global citizen science project.

The Big Microplastic survey is a project being undertaken by Just One Ocean and the University of Portsmouth and the Challenge Wales charity, which runs the sail training vessels *Challenge Wales | Wales' Tall Ship* and *Adventure Wales*, is just one of many groups around the world that are contributing to this scientific study.

Although volunteers took part for the first survey, it will be young people aged 12 – 25 years, who the charity works with who will be driving it forward and taking part in future surveys that the charity undertakes.

Kerry Rees, Youth Development Officer, for Challenge Wales said *“Our sail training voyages not only develop essential life-skills of young people and give them accreditation to recognise their achievements, but are making them more aware of one-use plastics and their impact on the marine world. The microplastics survey is suitable for all abilities and ages and will add to the environmental element of our sail training activities as well as providing important data which feeds into the wider picture. It’s great that we can be part of a global scientific study and play our part.”*

Vicky Williams, Challenge Wales Trustee stated *“It was great fun taking part in the survey and although some of our sampling showed no microplastics, in others we saw nurdles, cotton bud sticks and polystyrene. It’s a really engaging and thought-provoking activity for anyone to get involved with which is why we can’t wait for our young trainees onboard to get involved. We often see large pieces of plastic debris when we are sailing but less seems to be known about the issues of microplastics which are getting into the food chain”.*

Adding a microplastic survey to the work that Challenge Wales does is the latest addition to the Challenge Wales programme. The charity is already part of a science project measuring plankton and last year the sailing charity launched their accredited Agored Cymru Environmental Project with Volvo Ocean Race Skipper, Dee Caffari who was racing on *Turn the Tide on Plastic*.

With sail training voyages ranging from 1 – 14 days, and different coastal regions visited, there should be lots of opportunities for young people and Challenge Wales to contribute significantly to the Big Microplastic Survey.



Challenge Wales

Challenge Wales is an award-winning sail training charity that uses the medium of sailing to teach life skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership and self-confidence. The charity operates *Challenge Wales* a 72-foot round-the-world yacht and a 60-foot schooner *Adventure Wales*. In 2018 the charity won the Sail Training International Environment Award.

Funding from the National Lottery Community Fund has enabled the charity to develop accredited learning and work with disadvantaged young people in Wales.

Adventure Wales has been supported by the European Regional Development Fund through Welsh Government and through the Social Business Growth Fund, which is managed by WCVA (Welsh Council of Voluntary Action).

For more information visit www.challengewales.org or email Vicky@challengewales.org

The Big Microplastic Survey

The Big Microplastic Survey began in July 2018 and was developed as a collaboration between Just One Ocean and the University of Portsmouth. The University will analyse the data and prepare the scientific papers arising from the results alongside Just One Ocean.

For more information visit www.microplasticsurvey.org and www.justoneocean.org